

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 11535 211646Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 NEA-11 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 /122 W
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R 211600Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3709
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 11535

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR ET IT
SUBJECT: SOVIET OFFICIAL ON ERITREA

1. MFA DIRECTOR FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS RACHELE TOLD US JUNE 21
THAT IN JUNE 16 CALL ON HIM, SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL SAID THAT
USSR OPPOSES USE OF CUBAN TROOPS IN ERITREA. OFFICIAL ADDED
THAT SOVIET UNION HAS EXPERIENCED HEAVY DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE
--FROM MORE RADICAL ARAB AND AFRICAN STATES SUCH AS IRAQ, SYRIA,
MOZAMBIQUE AND MADAGASCAR--AGAINST INVOLVEMENT IN ETHIOPIAN
DRIVE AGAINST ERITREANS. SOVIETS ARE MOVING TO POSITION FAVOR-
ING NEGOTIATED SOLUTION TO PROBLEM INCLUDING POSSIBILITY OF
SUPPORT FOR REFERENDUM BY ERITREANS.

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2. RACHELE SAID THAT SOVIET OFFICIAL ADDED THAT USSR
SEES MENGISTU REGIME MOVING IN "NATIONALISTIC AND
IRRATIONAL" DIRECTION FRIENDLIER TO "CERTAIN WESTERN
COUNTRIES" THAN TO SOVIET UNION. RACHELE POINTED TO
VARIOUS RUMORS OF ATTEMPT BY CUBANS AND SOVIETS TO
OUST MENGISTU. ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONTS RECENTLY

DESCRIBED PLANS FOR "COUP D'ETAT" WHICH WOULD HAVE
REPLACED MENGISTU DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO HAVANA.
ERITREANS ARE ALSO SAYING THAT THEY HAVE BEEN INFORMED
BY AL-FATAH THAT SOUTH YEMEN IS HAVE TOLD PALESTINIANS
THEY WILL WITHDRAW THEIR 1500-2000-MAN CONTINGENT FROM
ETHIOPIA (PRINCIPALLY ERITREA). ERITREANS ARE NOT ENTIRELY
CONVINCED AND ARE STILL CONCERNED ABOUT MASSIVE ARMS SHIP-
MENTS FROM SOVIETS WHICH CONTINUE TO POUR INTO ETHIOPIA. GARDNER

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